

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L KINGSTON 4657

DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS TO USIA FOR IOP/M

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: UNESCO, JM

SUBJECT: UNESCO 19TH GENERAL CONFERENCE: JAMAICANS ON MASS MEDIA

REFERENCE: KINGSTON 4656

1. HOWEVER UNSYMPATHETIC JAMAICAN GOVERNMENT MAY PROVE TO BE REGARDING THE DRAFT DECLARATION ON MASS MEDIA (REFTEL), THERE IS ONE JAMAICAN -- HECTOR WYNTER, EXECUTIVE EDITOR OF "THE GLEANER" AND CHAIRMAN OF UNESCO'S EXECUTIVE BOARD -- WHO SEES THE ISSUE INsofar AS IT TOUCHES ON PRESS FREEDOM IN SOMEWHAT MORE HELPFUL TERMS.

2. WYNTER WROTE A SIGNED ARTICLE WHICH APPEARED IN "THE GLEANER" ON OCTOBER 23 IN WHICH, WHILE DEFENDING THE DRAFT DECLARATION, HE URGED THAT ARTICLE XII BE AMENDED IF NEED BE; WE ASSUME THAT SUCH AMENDMENT COULD INCLUDE DELETION. WYNTER'S ARTICLES FOLLOWED SHORTLY AFTER A SPATE OF REPORTS CARRIED BY "THE GLEANER" CONCERNING THE WILLIAMSBURG MEETING OF THE INTER-AMERICAN PRESS ASSOCIATION AND APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN IN PARTIAL RESPONSE TO THE ATTACKS ON UNESCO AT THAT MEETING BY THOSE WHO SEE THE ORGANIZATION AS A THREAT TO FREEDOM OF THE PRESS.

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3. IN HIS ARTICLES, WHICH APPEARED ON THE EDITORIAL PAGE OF "THE GLEANER", WYNTER CONTENDED THAT "UNESCO IS NOT ITSELF AN ENTITY APART FROM ITS MEMBER STATES ... (BUT) THE SUM TOTAL OF ITS MEMBERS". WHILE ACKNOWLEDGING THAT IAPA "IS JUSTIFIABLY VERY SENSITIVE ABOUT THE EROSION OF PRESS LIBERTIES BECAUSE IT IS A FACT THAT IN THE LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN AREA THE BATTLE FOR PRESS FREEDOM IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY MORE DIFFICULT..." WHYNTER CONTINUED, "IT WAS THEREFORE PROPER FOR THE IAPA TO EXPRESS CONCERN OVER SOME OF THE VIEWS OF SOME GOVERNMENT EXPERTS WHO ATTENDED A UNESCO MEETING OF EXPERTS IN ECUADOR IN 1975. BUT IS IS REGRETTED THAT SOME IAPA MEMBERS CONDUCTED SUCH A BITTER CAMPAIGN AGAINST UNESCO BEFORE THE JULY 1976 MEETING OF LATIN AMERICAN GOVERNMENTS IN COSTA RICA TO CONSIDER COMMUNICATION POLICIES. FORTUNATELY ... THE EXPLOSIVE ATMOSPHERE WAS DEFUSED ... AND THE MEETING IN SAN JOSE CONFOUNDED ITS CRITICS BY THE COMMON-SENSE NATURE OF ITS RECOMMENDATIONS."

4. AMONG THESE WAS ONE, WYNTER OBSERVED, WHICH URGED THAT "WHILE EMPHASIZING THE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY OF THE MEDIA, MEMBER STATES SHOULD BEAR IN MIND THAT DESPITE THE PLURALISTIC POLITICAL STRUCTURES OF THE PARTICIPATING STATES, THEY WOULD HAVE AS AN OBJECTIVE THE PROTECTION OF THE FREE OPERATION OF COMMUNICATION MEDIA AND ALL OTHER VEHICLES OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN HUMAN BEINGS."

5. WYNTER VOICED THE PRINCIPAL CONCERN OF THIRD-WORLD COUNTRIES WHEN HE OBSERVED: "THE CONFERENCE WAS UNDERSTANDABLY CONCERNED THAT THE FREE FLOW OF IDEAS BY WORD AND IMAGE APPEARED TO BE A ONE-SIDED FLOW (FROM THE DEVELOPED TO THE DEVELOPING) AND THAT HENCE MUTUAL KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF PEOPLES WAS NOT BEING ADVANCED. THUS, THE CONFERENCE PROPOSED THAT TO ACHIEVE BALANCE MEMBER STATES SHOULD CREATE EFFECTIVE MACHINERY FOR THIS PURPOSE. BUT THIS MACHINERY WOULD SUPPLEMENT EXISTING AGENCIES NOT REPLACE THEM".

6. NOTING THAT THE DRAFT DECLARATION PROPOSED FOR
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NAIROBI "HAS AROUSED GREAT APPREHENSION IN IAPA AND IN THE WESTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES", WHYNTER BRIEFLY REVIEWED THE HISTORY OF ITS DEVELOPMENT SINCE 1972 INCLUDING THE "WALK-OUT OF 14 MEMBER STATES" IN DECEMBER 1975 WHEN THE AMENDMENT EQUATING ZIONISM WITH RACISM WAS ATTACHED. THE MAJOR CONCERN, HE STATED, IS WITH ARTICLE XII WHICH SAYS "STATES ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ACTIVITIES IN THE INTERNATIONAL SPHERE OF ALL

MASS MEDIA UNDER THEIR JURISDICTION". (EMPHASIS HIS)
"THE TWIN CONCEPTS OF STATE RESPONSIBILITY FOR MEDIA,
AND THAT OF 'UNDER THEIR JURISDICTION' ARE INIMICAL TO
THE CONCEPT OF PRESS FREEDOM IN SEVERAL COUNTRIES --
ESPECIALLY THE WEST. BUT THEIR SEEMS LITTLE TO OBJECT
TO IN THE OTHER TWELVE ARTICLES..."

7. THE ARTICLE CONCLUDED WITH WYNTER OFFERING THE
FOLLOWING FORMULA FOR COMPROMISE: "I BELIEVE THAT IT IS
POSSIBLE TO OBTAIN THE REQUIRED AMENDMENTS BY NEGOTIATION,
DISCUSSION AND CONSENSUS BUT MUCH DEPENDS ON THE METHODS
AND THE GOODWILL OF THOSE SEEKING AMENDMENTS. ATTEMPTS
TO REJECT THE WHOLE DECLARATION WILL HAVE LITTLE CHANCE
OF SUCCESS AS THEY WOULD BE ASKING THE MAJORITY OF
MEMBER STATES TO REVERSE THEMSELVES ON A FUNDAMENTAL
MATTER INVOLVING THE FIGHT AGAINST WAR, RACIAL DIS-
CRIMINATION, AND APARTHEID. BUT THOSE WHO BELIEVE ANY
CLAUSE WILL IMPAIR THE FREE OPERATION OF THE MEDIA IN THEIR
COUNTRIES CAN AND MUST SEEK AMENDMENTS FOR THE ESSENCE OF
INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION IS THE WILLINGNESS TO
RESPECT THE PRINCIPLES OF OTHERS WHILE BELIEVING IN YOURS...
"IT IS TO BE HOPED THAT CLAUSE 9 OF THE PREAMBLE DEALING
WITH THE PRESS FREEDOM CAN FIND REFLECTION IN THE
ARTICLES, AND THAT THOSE WHO VOTED AT THE UN THAT ZIONISM
IS TO BE EQUATED WITH RACISM WILL UNDERSTAND THE STRENGTH
OF FEELING OF THOSE WHO VOTED AGAINST AND THE APPREHENSIONS
OF THOSE WHO ABSTAINED, AND THUS ACCEPT THE VIEW THAT
REFERENCES TO UN'S POLITICAL DECISIONS HAVE NO PLACE
REALLY IN UNESCO'S OWN DECLARATION".

8. ON OCTOBER 24, FOLLOWING A BRIEF INTRODUCTION BY WYNTER,
"THE DAILY GLEANER" PUBLISHED THE FULL TEXT OF THE PROPOSED
UNESCO DECLARATION WITHOUT FURTHER COMMENT.
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